

Message Text

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FOR IOP/M

MEDIAREACT

E.O. 11652: N/A

1. TEGUCIGALPA'S EL DIA (SMALL CIRCULATION, CONSERVATIVE) FRONT PAGED IN OCT 18 EDITION "VOICE OF AMERICA ANNOUNCES COUP D'ETAT HERE." THIS EVIDENTLY TRIGGERED BY VOA NEWSCAST EVENING OF OCT 17 CONCERNING COUP RUMORS BASED UPON RELIEF SUPPLY "MISHANDLING" AND SPECULATION GOH CABINET CHANGES.

2. TO DATE, ONLY SAN PEDRO'S LA NOTICIA (PRO-PRIVATE SECTOR, OCCASIONALLY SENSATIONALIST) HAS FOLLOWED THROUGH ON CITED VOA ITEM. OCT 19 EDITORIAL "THE VOA AND THE COUP D'ETAT" WAS LOW-KEYED AND CRITICIZED EL DIA FOR CREDITING VOA WITH "A HABIT OF ANNOUNCING IMPORTANT EVENTS IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS." THE EDITORIAL ALSO CAST DOUBT AS TO VOA MAKING SUCH AN "IRRESPONSIBLE BROADCAST." SEVERAL TEGUCIGALPA RADIO COMMENTATORS PLAYED UP OVER WEEKEND THIS VOA NEWSCAST AND ALLUDED TO "USG PRESSURES FOR CABINET CHANGES AS CONDITIONS FOR USG DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE." MUCH OF THIS COMMENTARY, MOST NOTABLY NATION-WIDE RADIO AMERICA AND SMALL, BUT INFLUENTIAL, RADIO CENTRO, CONCURRENTLY

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PRAISED USG ROLE IN REBUILDING COUNTRY AND CRITICIZED

GOH, USING VOA ITEM TO SUPPORT COUP RUMORS AND/OR CABINET CHANGES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT MOST OF THESE COMMENTATORS HAVE LONG FOLLOWED ANTI-GOH LINE AND ARE PROBABLY SUBSIDIZED BY POLITICAL OUTS AND PRO-VESTED INTEREST ELEMENTS.

3. RADIO COMMENTATORS AND NEWSPAPERS SILENT THIS VOA MATTER OCT 20 AND 21 WHICH MAY PORTEND NIPPING ANY FURTHER NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO PROGNOSTICATE IMPACT OF THIS VOA NEWSCAST INTERPRETED AS "USG INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS" AND/OR "CONDITIONS FOR USG RELIEF ASSISTANCE."

4. THIS SITUATION UNFORTUNATE SINCE TO DATE NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF USG DISASTER RELIEF ROLE VERY INTENSIVE AND WARM. SPECULATION, FED BY ANTI-GOH ELEMENTS, COULD SNOW-BALL RE USG "INVOLVEMENT" IN GOH INTERNAL AFFAIRS AT TIME WHEN SITUATION ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE AND STILL UNDERMINED.

5. POST SENT BEEPER TO VOA EVENING OF OCT 18 TO GIVE BALANCE AND PLAY DOWN CITED VOA NEWSCAST. POST ALSO SENT VOA SEVERAL INTERVIEWS OF INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AGENCY OFFICIALS HIGHLIGHTING POSITIVE ASPECTS OVERALL RELIEF EFFORT TO PUT IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE ALLEGATIONS BY PRIVATE US GROUPS RE "MISHANDLING" OF RELIEF SUPPLIES. THIS ISSUE, CAUSED MAINLY BY MIAMI HERALD AND NEWSWEEK REPORTAGE (SEE USINFO OF OCT 15) STILL GIVEN EDITORIAL PLAY BY LOCAL PAPERS, MOST NOTABLY LA PRENSA. MIAMI HERALD FRONT PAGE ARTICLE OF OCT 21 BY WILLIAM MONTALBANO WHO VISITED HONDURAS LAST WEEK AND WAS GIVEN FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE BY EMBASSY, SHOULD BE HELPFUL IN PLAYING DOWN INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM OF GOH RELIEF ACTIVITIES AND SPECULATION RE CABINET CHANGES DUE RELIEF SUPPLY "MISHANDLING".

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